

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DPW-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 /082 W

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R 030740Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1544

INFO COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMIPAC HONOLULU

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 0065

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SAIGON INFO DAO SAIGON DTD 3 JAN 75 REPEATE
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QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0003

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS VS

SUBJECT: RVNAF PERFORMANCE DURING MR4 DECEMBER HIGHPOINT

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE SIGNIFICANT VC/NVA GAINS IN SOME AREAS OF THE DELTA, MR4 HAS APPARENTLY THWARTED PRIMARY GOALS OF THE DECEMBER HIGHPOINT. THREAT POSED BY 5TH NVA DIVISION TO VITAL LOC'S IN DINH TUONG PROVINCE WAS EARLY IDENTIFIED BY CORPS COMMANDER AS MOST DANGEROUS OBJECTIVE OF OPENING OF DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE. HE FOCUSED HIS ATTENTION ON THIS THREAT DESPITE APPARENT ENEMY EFFORTS DIVERT ATTENTION AND RESOURCES BY KICKING OFF WITH HEAVY ATTACKS IN SOUTHERN MR4. ARVN SHIFTED TO OFFENSIVE POSTURE AS NVA/VC ACTIVITY BEGAN TO WANE IN EFFORT TO FRUSTRATE PLANS FOR MORE INTENSE ATTACKS EXPECTED IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY. MAJOR VICTORY WAS
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SCORED IN CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE BY ARVN 21ST DIVISION

AGAINST NVA MAIN FORCE UNITS. END SUMMARY.

2. DECEMBER MR4 HIGHPOINT HAS BEEN COSTLY TO VC/NVA. FROM DEC 5 THROUGH DEC 30, RVNAF CLAIMS 4492 VC/NVA KILLED AND 101 PRISONERS. AT THE SAME TIME, COMMUNISTS HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN SOME AREAS OF DELTA. OF GREATEST PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT WAS LOSS OF HUNG LONG DISTRICT HQ IN CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE, THOUGH, IN FACT, HUNG LONG WAS ESTABLISHED ONLY THIS YEAR IN AN INSECURE AREA AS PART OF A GVN ATTEMPT TO PUT ALL ITS BAD APPLES IN ONE BARREL; IT WAS BY NO MEANS A DISTRICT TOWN IN THE NORMAL SENSE.

3. OF GREATER IMPORT WERE VC/NVA GAINS IN COUNTRYSIDE OF AN XUYEN AND VINH BINH PROVINCES. IN AN XUYEN, 37 GVN POSITIONS (OF 123 EXISTING BEFORE THE HIGHPOINT) WERE LOST AND HAVE NOT YET BEEN RETAKEN. ONLY 6 POSITIONS REMAIN IN DAM DOI (D) AND ONLY 2 IN SONG ONG DOC (D), WHERE THE DISTRICT TOWN IS NOW THREATENED. IN VINH BINH, WHERE REPORTING IS LESS RELIABLE, ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF GVN OUTPOSTS LOST RUN AS HIGH AS 60 PERCENT OF THOSE EXISTING BEFORE THE HIGHPOINT.

4. DESPITE THIS UNDENIABLE DETERIORATION, HOWEVER, PRIMARY VC/NVA GOALS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN THWARTED. WHEN HEAVY FIGHTING FIRST ERUPTED IN SOUTHERN DELTA, CORPS COMMANDER MG NAM ORDERED TWO ARVN BATTALIONS TO MOVE TO NORTHERN DELTA BECAUSE HE BELIEVED PRINCIPAL THREAT WOULD BE MOVE BY 5TH NVA DIVISION INTO POSITION TO INTERDICT HIGHWAY 4. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS HAVE PROVEN NAM'S ASSESSMENT TO BE CORRECT: THE 5TH DIVISION HAS MOVED INTO MR4 BUT HAS SO FAR BEEN UNABLE TO OVERRUN EVEN TUYEN NHON DISTRICT TOWN IN KIEN TUONG PROVINCE (ITS SHORT TERM TARGET) OR TO MOVE INTO POSITION FOR FUTURE ATTACKS ON HIGHWAY 4. HENCE, RVNAF HAS HAD TO YIELD SOME GROUND IN THE SOUTHERN DELTA, BUT HAS THWARTED THE PRIMARY THREAT--INTERDICTION OF THE VITAL LOC'S TRAVERSING DINH TUONG PROVINCE.

5. IN ADDITION, RVNAF HAS NOT STOOD IDLY BY IN THE FACE OF VC/NVA INITIATIVES. FOLLOWING A FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE AGAINST INTENSE PRESSURE THROUGHOUT THE MONTH, RVNAF ADOPTED AN OFFENSIVE POSTURE IN AN EFFORT TO PREEMPT VC/NVA PLANS FOR RENEWING OFFENSIVE INCLUDING HEAVIER COMMITMENT OF MAIN FORCE

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UNITS. IMPRESSIVE RESULTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN REPORTED IN CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE, WHERE, ON DEC 25, 33RD ARVN REGIMENT, WITH ARMOR AND ARTILLERY SUPPORT, CONTACTED THE VC D-2 REGIMENT. 347 VC/NVA TROOPS HAVE BEEN REPORTED KILLED IN A SERIES OF BRISK ENCOUNTERS. THOUGH WDJTNE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN INDEPENDENT CORROBORATION OF THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN CHUONG THIEN, IF THE REPORTED FIGURE IS EVEN APPROXIMATELY ACCURATE, COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS OF THE D-2 HAS BEEN

SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED. THIS SHOULD SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE ENEMY OFFENSIVE POTENTIAL IN SOUTHERN DELTA.

6. AS A LONGER TERM MEASURE, MR4 ORGANIZED SPECIAL AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY IN VINH LONG, VINH BINH, SA DEC, PHONG DINH AND BA XUYEN PROVINCES. TERRITORIAL FORCES IN THESE PROVINCES ARE NOW UNDER UNIFIED COMMAND OF MR4 TASK FORCE HEADED BY SENIOR COLONEL. BATTALIONS FROM THREE DELTA ARVN DIVISIONS WILL ALSO BE UNDER TACTICAL COMMAND OF TASK FORCE WHEN OPERATING IN AREA. THE NEW COMMAND STRUCTURE IS DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH CRITICAL PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP, AND WILL, WE BELIEVE, STRENGTHEN THE DELTA'S CENTRAL PROVINCES, WHICH HAVE EXPERIENCED GRADUAL EROSION OF GVN TERRITORIAL CONTROL THROUGHOUT 1974.

7. THE DECEMBER HIGHPOINT WAS NO DOUBT ONLY ONE OF A SERIES; VC/NVA ABILITY TO MAINTAIN INTENSITY OF PRESSURE AND GVN ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO REACT EFFECTIVELY WILL BE SEVERELY TESTED IN JAN AND FEB. NONETHELESS, WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY GENERAL NAM'S COOL, PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE IN IDENTIFYING PRINCIPAL THREAT, KEEPING ATTENTION FOCUSED THERE DESPITE DIVERSIONARY ATTACKS ELSEWHERE, AND THWARTING NVA MOVE BY TIMELY DEPLOYMENT OF REINFORCEMENTS. IN ADDITIONS, ARVN AGGRESSIVENESS AGAINST VC/NVA UNITS, SUCH AS MOST RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED IN CHUONG THIEN, MAY WELL FORCE THE OTHER SIDE TO REEVALUATE ITS GOALS FOR THE CURRENT SERIES OF HIGHPOINTS. SOME FURTHER VGN LOSSES IN PERIPHERAL AREAS SUCH AS AN XUYEN ARE INEVITABLE. NONETHELESS, GIVEN ADEQUATE MATERIAL SUPPORT OVER NEXT SIX MONTHS, NOW APPEARS GVN FORCES CAN COPE WITH MAIN NVA/VA THREATS IN DELTA DURING THIS DRY SEASON.

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